

EDUCATION KIT



CREDITS

Education Resource written by Anne Keast, museum education consultant and content writer and Lucy Macdonald, museum education consultant.

The writers acknowledges the particular contribution of Margaret Hancock Davis, Sophie Guiney, Canvas Group and that of JamFactory staff, and the participating artists.

Published by
JamFactory
19 Morphett Street
Adelaide SA 5000
T 08 8410 0727
E contact@jamfactory.com.au

Copyright © the author, artists and JamFactory
All rights reserved. The publisher grants permission for this Education Resource to be reproduced and/or stored for twelve months in a retrieval system, transmitted by means electronic, mechanical, photocopying and/or recording only for education purposes and strictly in relation to the exhibition, *JamFactory Icon Gerry Wedd: Kltschen Man*, 22 July - 11 September and subsequent tour until March 2019.

JamFactory Icon Gerry Wedd: Kltschen Man 978-0-9807910-3-7

This Education Resource is published to accompany the exhibition.

JamFactory Icon Exhibition

Gerry Wedd: Kitschen Man

OVERVIEW

1. This resource provides information and curriculum connections for secondary students viewing recent works by South Australian ceramic artist Gerry Wedd.

Curriculum connections throughout this resource address State frameworks developed by New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victorian education departments in response to the Australian National Curriculum developed by ACARA, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.

Curriculum Priorities specified by ACARA addressed in this resource include links to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience and connections with Asian culture.

2. This JamFactory Icon Exhibition is one of an annual event celebrating South Australian masters of creative excellence. ICON exhibitions present work by established designer makers in the JamFactory Exhibition Gallery.

3. The exhibitions clever title 'Gerry Wedd: Kitschen Man' is a colourful hybrid identifying Wedd as a man of kitchens and a celebrant of questionable taste i.e. kitsch. Kitchens and kitsch are foundation themes of Gerry's work and although the words sound similar their meanings and origins are linguistically different.

- **Kitsch** *originated from German meaning carelessly thrown together, shoddy or tacky. Kitsch is now a disparaging term describing poor taste in the arts.

- Kitchens have been significant for Wedd since he was a child and his work celebrates their broad role in Australian cultural life. As a boy his family kitchen was the home of his early pottery experiences as he helped his mother, Felicity, in her pottery business.

- Wedd's kitsch style rebels against good taste and acceptability. Although he often applies a convoluted decoration style, his pots are not decorated for the sake of decoration; Wedd's embellishments almost camouflage his bigger theme of human amorality, as in *Banal Pot*, about the CIA's **Abu Ghraib** gaol.

* **Bold terms** are explained in the Glossary at the end of this resource



Gerry Wedd, *Midget Jar*, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen

CONTENTS

SECTION 1:

MEET THE ARTIST

biography, creative development and career

SECTION 2:

EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

Wedd's work viewed through four framing themes

Theme 1

GERRY WEDD THE MAKER

formal/structural framework

Theme 2

DIVING INTO GERRY'S WORLD

personal/subjective framework

Theme 3

GERRY THE ALL AUSTRALIAN SURFER

cultural framework

Theme 4

GERRY REPORTS HISTORY

post modern/contemporary framework

SECTION 3:

FOR TEACHERS

pre visit and post visit considerations

SECTION 4:

GETTING STARTED

for students, easy access to art through exhibition experiences

SECTION 5:

FURTHER RESEARCH

sources, links, themes, traditions

SECTION 6:

GLOSSARY

Bolded terms are explained in a glossary at the end of this resource

SECTION 1

MEET THE ARTIST



In the studio, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen

1950s

Born in 1957 Gerry Wedd grew up in Port Noarlunga, South Australia, living in a large ramshackle shady house on a large block with old trees and a sprawling garden.

1970s

Wedd's mother Felicity Wedd involved her son Gerry in ceramics in the mid 1970s after she completed a local TAFE course and was enthusiastically pursuing her own pottery career. She has appeared on several of his early pottery works in various female images.

On leaving Christies Beach High School Wedd's parents encouraged him to study an Advanced Craft certificate at TAFE, specialising in jewellery. His teacher Don Ellis encouraged and developed his natural ability, which Wedd eventually saw as a way of earning a living. During the 1970s Gerry was focussed on his surfing winning 6 state surfing titles back to back; he still uses a 5'2" McCoy Nugget in all conditions under 4'.

It has always been important to Gerry to look for inspiration from the place where he lives. His domestic environment, his beloved local beach and all its local identities became illustrations on his domestic wares. His products were distinctly **hand-built** with the crafting of his cups, teapots or platters still obvious to the user.

1980s

Wedd moved to nearby Willunga in 1980, selling jewellery and pottery through local shops while enjoying his surfing.

In 1984 Gerry Wedd began his art studies seriously by enrolling at the South Australian School of Art as a mature age student of 28. His abilities as a potter were recognised immediately by his lecturers.

While he was at art school, Wedd witnessed changes in local ceramic tastes. Skangarooonian Funk was a tongue in cheek style explored by local artists Margaret Dodd and Mark Thompson whom Wedd admired; it was making way for a more austere Japanese style of functional stoneware, practiced by local ceramicists like Milton Moon, which was gaining in popularity.

A pivotal moment for Gerry was the arrival of a visiting lecturer Susan Weschler to the Art School, and her book *Low Fire Ceramics* reaffirmed Wedd's growing belief that his work could reflect popular culture. Gerry was later employed at the South Australian School of Art as a tutor and lecturer and it was where he met his future wife and fellow artist Christine De Rosa.

In 1987 Wedd became a studio tenant at the original JamFactory Workshops site on Payneham Road St Peters. Working in the ceramics studio for three years he developed and refined his skills as both a potter and professional artist.

1990s

1991 was the significant year when Wedd co-founded the Jamboree Workshop in Welland, a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia. His fellow potters Jo Crawford, Peter Johnson and Philip Hart had similar outlooks about their pottery production with a shared aim to produce functional decorative pottery. All four were influenced by potter Bronwyn Kemp, who had been the head of their ceramic studio at the JamFactory Workshops.

That same year Wedd began a very productive working relationship with cutting edge Australian design company, Mambo Graphics, creating and designing ceramics, textiles, posters, clothing, metalwork and surfboards. This collaboration lasted for 15 years until 2006.

In 1994 Wedd and his partner Christine De Rosa travelled to places of personal interest in Europe followed by New York, Mexico and Guatemala. They both wanted to see the Mexican Day of the Dead folk art and during their travels in Mexico Wedd discovered the Olmec terra cotta figures. His Mexican experiences found their way into imagery he produced for the Mambo Graphics Company in the following decade. Wedd's inspiration goes far beyond his travels.

Wedd's love of music is ever present in his work, with references to 1990s musicians Nick Cave and Leonard Cohen appearing at this time. Country and Western ballads lamenting our darker side have been a constant stimulation appearing in his work up to the present day.

A major theme appearing throughout Wedd's four decades of work is the much loved **Willow pattern**, which had its origins in early Chinese ceramics before being appropriated by 18th century European potteries for mass production.

"Willow Pattern is a source for me because everyone recognises it immediately which makes it ideal to play with"

Gerry Wedd: Thong Cycle, Mark Thomson, Wakefield Press, 2008

2000s

Size does not limit Gerry Wedd to making his trademark pottery pieces. He has been involved in several Public Artworks such as 'Underneath the Arches' made in 2000 and located under the King William Street Bridge, Adelaide. This artwork is a 7000 tile mural lining the walkway on both sides of the river, showing changes to the River Torrens and the indigenous flora and fauna of the local Adelaide plains area.



Example of the 18th century Willow

Following this project in 2007 he was commissioned to create a City Play space for children in Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide. This work reflects Wedd's love affair with the 'ordinary' as seen in large sculptures of a gigantic thong, a fish skeleton and blades of grass big enough for children to play on.

That year Wedd also completed a Masters of Arts at the South Australian School of Art. His thesis was titled "Pot culture-domestic ceramics as subversive texts" and explored his interest in text as decoration carrying double meanings and messages.

After 10 years of living and working in the city the Wedd family moved back to the coast to Port Elliott where both Gerry and Christine have their own purpose built garden studios.

This location allows Wedd and his family to pursue their shared love of surfing on a daily basis, with just a short stroll down to the sea, if the surf is up.

"So forty years and thousands of pots on I still make functional (in the broadest sense) things from clay in the manner that makers have for centuries"

Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man Catalogue, 2016, Icon Exhibition

Gerry is one of many artists who enjoy tackling '**sacred cows**' of the world. From the 18th century **Willow ware** was a style of tea set that came out on special occasions in English parlours, kept for important guests. Wedd has moved it to the kitchen on informal mugs and platters often mixed with hints of local interest and humour.



Vessel Cup, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen



Wahine Plate, 2014. Photo: Courtesy of the artist

EXAMPLES

18TH CENTURY WILLOW WARE



18th Century Willow Ware Platter

BLUE & WHITE

GERRY WEDD



Pot Culture Vase, 2015.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist



Arcadia, 2009. Photo: Courtesy of the artist

SECTION 2

EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION



Gerry Wedd: *Kitschen Man* Exhibition at JamFactory, 2016. Photo: Anna Fenech Harris

INTRODUCTION: WHAT YOU WILL SEE

Gerry Wedd's decorated functional ceramics explore contemporary life. His vessel shapes come from familiar forms of pottery like urns, teapots and platters while his quirky sculptures tweak several traditions of European ceramic ornaments. Although Wedd trained as a potter his ceramics are now an art platform, revealing his interests and deeply held concerns. His ceramics have an intellectual role.

Wedd's lifelong themes are visible in this exhibition, some celebrating endearing elements of Australian life like road trips, surfing culture, mongrel dogs, kitchens and popular music. However, his concerns about contemporary human behaviour add a sombre balance, particularly in his large arrangement called *Into the Woods Tableau*, along with several topical pots *War Gun Pot* and *History Pot*.

Theme 1

GERRY WEDD THE MAKER

formal /structural framework.

This theme explores how Gerry Wedd works as an **artisan** by looking at his range of ceramic objects, his construction and firing methods and his decoration techniques.

Wedd is a potter (clay artisan) and an **artist**. As an artisan he is a skilled workman who has developed a pragmatic way of working with materials and equipment.

- Through the exhibition list we can see the decisions Wedd makes for each work, involving his choice of clays, firing temperatures and glazes. The artistic meaning of each pot is carried by its title and decoration.
- Wedd likes challenging tradition by exploring his media of clay and glazes. He pushes ceramic techniques to their limits to obtain unexpected qualities like asymmetrical shapes, uneven surfaces and running glazes. He likes the unpredictable;

“Pottery is a pact between myself and the process. I’m not comfortable being in complete control. Without a tad of kiln and glazed induced alchemy it’s not terribly rewarding.”

Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man Catalogue, 2016, Icon Exhibition

- Although ceramics are Wedd’s creative focus, his artistic versatility has led him to other projects in a range of media outside ceramics. These include designing highly figurative T shirts and fabric patterns for Mambo Inc and several commissioned works for Adelaide public art works, including metal sculptures for a skate park, a concrete play zone and a huge tiled mural.

1. RANGE OF OBJECTS

Gerry Wedd’s pieces include functional looking pots, urns and amphora, bowls and dishes, teapots, platters and plates and non functional sculptural works in the form of figurines and ceramic thongs, a long time favourite.

- Wedd’s larger vessels are contemporary versions of traditional forms of ancient Mediterranean pottery urns and amphora, designed for storage.
- One of his unusual dish forms is derived from the elongated open shapes of Aboriginal **coolamons**. Instead of being tough wooden bowls Wedd’s clay versions of the coolamon are brittle and decorative, with a role as art works exploring ideas.
- Wedd’s sculptural pieces show his latest ceramic thongs and a large collection of free-standing figurines and animals, grouped together into a complex narrative **tableau**. Wedd has made ceramic thongs in the past, often decorated with Willow Pattern.
- His figurines echo a ceramic tradition of figure ornaments, particularly those made by Staffordshire (England) potteries from the 17th century. Popular characters from English villages and towns, sometime criminals, even dogs and domestic animals were made in white clay and painted gaudily with coloured glazes.



Strange Fruit Bowl, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen

2. CONSTRUCTING

Wedd builds or constructs his objects using **hand building techniques** and a **potter's wheel**. He favours hand building for the organic irregularity it can give.

Coil construction is Wedd's preferred hand building technique. Coils are sometimes visible in his finished works, particularly in *Teenage Wildlife Vase*, *Voyager Pot*, *Head Pot* and *History Pot*.

- Coils are worked onto a base to spiral upwards, their surfaces worked and joined together with the help of **slip clay** as a type of glue. The piece is usually built on a wheel or turning base for easy access.
- Evidence of coils can be seen on outside and interior surfaces, sometimes producing a slightly ribbed appearance to the potter's preference.
- Coil construction can be very strong and Wedd clearly has a high level of skill in manipulating coils. As with wheel thrown pots the potter must make sure the walls (of a coiled pot) are kept at a consistent thickness for successful firing, and at an appropriate thickness for the pot, ie not too thick or thin.

Slab construction is a hand building technique used by Wedd for making flat platform bases, as in his Thongs soles and the Tableau figures. Hand modelled figures, trees, animals and the thong straps are slip glued to their slab bases.

Hand modelling is used for Wedd's figures, trees and animals that populate the *Tableau*. This method enables him to achieve detailed leaves, animal fur and facial expressions.

Wheel thrown pieces are made on a **pottery wheel** and include his teapots and coolamon-like dishes. These begin as a turned disc of clay, which is then carefully worked as the clay dries, curling the sides upwards. Wheel turning or throwing is not considered a hand building method, although Wedd's teapots require a significant amount of hand work in their final rounded shapes and lids, spouts and decorations. Teapots often require several wheel thrown shapes joined together.

3. DECORATING

Gerry Wedd's decoration techniques give his work its distinctive style, with many pieces combining several methods working together.

- Wedd's decoration process often begins by covering the piece in an under layer, a coloured coating using a **slip glaze** of liquid clay and colouring minerals. This first layer acts as a surface on which Wedd can work by adding sprigged (relief) motifs, more glazes, painting drawing or scratched images.
- On *War Gun Pot* Wedd alternated bands of coloured **slip glaze** with bands of images in patterns of weapons and opium poppies. Wedd used a technique called **sgraffito** on this pot, which looks at the frightening relationship between weapons and drugs in the war industry.
- **Sgraffito** is a time-consuming technique seen particularly on *Head Pot*, *War Gun Pot*, *Boney Dish*, *Surf Urns* and *Mambo Jar*. In this method Wedd scrapes away the background around a shape he wants, removing one or two layers of previously applied glaze. This scraping back allows the desired shape to remain, coloured by the glaze of the top layer. Wedd often achieves an appearance similar to lino-cut prints, where remnants of the removed layers are visible around an image, thus adding character and texture to his surfaces.
- **Scratch line drawing** with a sharp ended tool incises lines through layers of glaze. Since he was a boy Wedd has liked to draw on pottery and now he combines it with other methods, adding fine detail and surface texture to his complex surfaces.
- **Sprigging** is a technique for making 3D relief motifs that are adhered to a **green ware** or **bisque** surface before glazes are applied. Sprigging is seen on several pots and teapots including *Last House Teapot*, *So It Goes*, *Open Road Pot* and *Henry Lee Pot*. Wedd makes **sprig** floral rosettes, cords and flower stems which are combined with painted, scratched and **sgraffito** glaze treatments.

- **Blue Cobalt glaze** is a favourite glaze of Wedd's which he applies with a small paint brush as if it was watercolour paint. He adds this blue to a ground of white, often a slip glaze. Most of his **blue and white** pots, like *History Pot*, *Party Plate*, *Willow Pot* and the *Tableau* figures are decorated in this way.
- **Coloured glazes** (other than the translucent cobalt blue) have been used on several pieces including *Gram Pot* and *Myth and Light Teapot*.

4. FIRING

Wedd **fires** most of his work at a mid temperature in his own electric **kiln**. **Mid fire** describes temperatures in the vicinity of 1220 degrees C, which is higher than used for **earthenware** (1200 C) and lower than porcelain firings (1400 C).

- Higher temperatures make stronger more impervious and brittle products, as long as the clay recipe has the appropriate ingredients for the temperature.
- Mid temperatures make stoneware and harder products than earthenware.
- Lower temperatures make less hard **earthenware** eg flower pots, roof tiles.
- Wedd has used mid temperature firings since 1987 by using clays specially designed for mid firing.
- Although he can fire at lower temperatures than are usual for porcelain, Wedd is still able to make porcelain by using a special mid fire porcelain clay made in Australia, called **Cool Ice Porcelain Clay**. Some examples are *Teenage Wildlife Vase* and *Sharkfin Blues Pot*.
- A pot may go through several firings before its layers of decoration with various glazes are complete.
- Different clays are required for different temperature ranges.
- Earthenware pieces appearing in this show are fired at a lower temperature, and are usually red terra cotta clay, for example *Willow Pot* and *Birthday Party Pot*.
- Some larger pots require the use of a larger **kiln** and several pieces in this show were fired in the JamFactory Ceramics Workshop kilns, for example the *George Greenborough Pot*.



kiln opening, 2016.
Photo: Andrew Cohen

Theme 2

DIVING INTO GERRY'S WORLD

subjective/personal framework

Works described in detail: Tattoo Teapot, Ship Song Teapot, Cattle and Cane Teapot, Burning House Teapot, Myth and Light Teapot



Thong Cycle, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of the artist

Throughout Wedd's career the domestic side of life has provided a rich source of imagery for his wares, as has the surfing culture which is such an important part of his family experience. Contemporary music is another inspiration for Wedd along with a deep interest in art traditions. However, Wedd's world is much wider than these themes and the viewer will need to look closely at his pots to find the global, social and political issues that attract his attention.

"The skills I gleaned at the kitchen table where my mother potted provided a dusty blue print for a merging of life style and work practice."

Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man Catalogue, 2016, Icon Exhibition

- Starting his career as an **artisan** potter under his mother's tutelage made a lasting impact on Wedd and began his interest in producing domestic wares. The term domestic describes the functional use of his pieces and many of the **motifs** he uses to decorate them.
- Wedd is inspired by ordinary items of family life found around his own home and his local suburban environment; a favourite dog, the neighbour's house, spanners, a thong, even a simple key or the words from a favourite song heard on his studio radio can feature as decoration on cups and teapots.
- As a boy Wedd liked drawing directly onto the clay although in those early days working for his mother he was not aware it was considered a naive practice to draw directly on pots. For him it seemed natural to add drawn decoration by scratching into the surface covering of slip.
- Wedd likes working beyond usual practices and is not intimidated by traditional expectations of what a pot should look like in its shape, decoration and finish.

“Throughout my practice I have been interested in those ceramics that are unashamedly decorated and decorative. These ceramics the modernist signifiers relegate them to the area of **kitsch**. My interest in this kind of work is not smugly ironic; behind every shudder this kind of work elicits, there is a twinkling of something with a lot more potential than the merely frivolous.”

Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man Catalogue, 2016, Icon Exhibition

- The **counter culture** values and life style of the sixties, often referred to as the flower power or hippie movement, appealed to young Wedd for its surfing culture. As a young boy of 11 he had followed his older siblings to the beach to go surfing. Wedd the teenager identified surfing culture as being ‘outside the norm’ and was keen to become part of it. The prospect of a self sustaining lifestyle ultimately appealed to Wedd the adult, who made and sold pots between surfing.

- Surf inspired music accompanied Wedd’s early life from its introduction by his siblings, who liked surf culture music of groups like *The Beach Boys*. By the 1990s his musical tastes had changed to the more sombre music of Jonathan Richman and Leonard Cohen, which he sang as the front man for a band called The Artisans. Music and radio are Wedd’s constant companions each day in his studio and occasionally musical lyrics find their way onto the pot he is working on.

“So forty years and thousands of pots on I still make functional (in the broadest sense) things from clay in the manner that makers have for centuries.”

Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man Catalogue, 2016, Icon Exhibition

Teapots appear frequently in Wedd’s domestic range as symbols of family and home life. From their place in the kitchen where they provide that restorative beverage, tea, Wedd hopes that by adding unconventional decorations to teapots, they will become the centre of conversation around the table while the tea is brewing.

Gerry Wedd cleverly combines these domestic objects with music. All six teapots have been decorated with imagery and lyrics from singer/songwriters as diverse as *Joni Mitchell*, *Nick Cave*, *The Triffids*, *The Go-Betweens* and the youngest contributor *Cam* (Cameron Ochs).

“I like a good cover version and I often feel I’m doing three dimensional cover versions of songs in my work. It’s a reinterpretation but also a tribute. And while I usually get the meaning of the song, I’m also pleased to wilfully misinterpret things too.”

Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man Catalogue, 2016, Icon Exhibition

1. TATTOO TEAPOT: WHEEL THROWN, COBALT DECORATED, MID-FIRED.

Tattoo teapot is based around Joni Mitchell’s song *Blue*. Mitchell has been an icon of contemporary folk music for over four decades, influencing many younger musicians. During her long performing career her poetic lyrics have conveyed messages protesting against many social and political issues, so she is of great interest to Wedd.

Mitchell’s lyrics decorate the surface, drawn onto the teapot along with illustrations, as in the shells mentioned in those lyrics. The 80’s music scene has long been associated with the introduction of drugs such as marijuana, and the well known plant leaf appears amongst these other decorative elements.

2. SHIP SONG TEAPOT: WHEEL THROWN, COBALT DECORATED, MID-FIRED.

Ship Song Teapot is based on a song by international musician, Nick Cave. Cave is an Australian singer/songwriter with many other creative talents such as scriptwriting, writing and acting. His music has been a part of the alternative music scene since the late 1980s and his lyrics have earned him the Rock Music title ‘Prince of Darkness’.

Ship Song was first released in 1990 on Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds’ *Good Son* Album. The lyrics decorating Wedd’s teapot reference sailing ships from the title, and are beautifully illustrated around the circumference. Wedd added an image of a burning bridge on the second side of the pot. Both references are repeated in the chorus of Cave’s *Ship Song* and comment on a relationship between a man and a woman.

3. CATTLE AND CANE TEAPOT: WHEEL THROWN, COBALT DECORATED, MID-FIRED.

Grant Mc Lennan, a member of the Australian band called the *Go-Betweens*, wrote the song *Cattle and Cane* for his mother while he was living in England. It is an autobiographical story of a boyhood trip returning home to rural Queensland on the train. As a boy he was sent away to boarding school in the city and missed his country home. McLennan's memories of that trip were of passing through cattle paddocks and fields of cane, hence the title of the song. Gerry Wedd adapted both the lyrics and their imagined images for his teapot.

4. BURNING HOUSE TEAPOT: WHEEL THROWN, COBALT DECORATED, MID-FIRED.

Wedd's breadth of musical taste is demonstrated by his choice of music by Cameron Ochs, a young American country western singer/songwriter. *Burning House* is the title song on Cam's recently released first album *Welcome to Cam Country*. The lyrics of this love song focus around a burning house and a lost love, both of which feature on Wedd's *Burning House Teapot*. Images of a man's head straining with the effort of screaming the word "Yell" and of a love heart locket, give further clues to the message in Cam's song.

5. MYTH AND LIGHT TEAPOT

Myth and Light Teapot attracts the viewer's attention due to the bright yellow glaze, which contrasts with the blue and white decorative images. The mythological reference is seen in an illustration of young man's arm with a large wing attached. Perhaps this figure is Icarus from Greek mythology, whose wings made of wax and feathers melted when he flew too close to the sun; his over confidence caused him to plummet into the ocean where he perished. The other side of the teapot shows a second man falling, who appears to be dressed in contemporary stripped pyjamas, and who maybe Gerry Wedd's present day version of the Icarus theme.

Other well made, ornately decorated teapots in Wedd's exhibition combine his wonderful blend of functional domesticity, music and wit. *Wide Open Road Teapot* is a dedication to lyrics by *The Triffids*. This teapot is recognisable by its illustration of an old model sedan car doing a burn out.

Theme 3

GERRY THE ALL AUSTRALIAN SURFER

cultural Framework

Works described in detail: Farrelly Plate, George Greenough Pot, Drouyn Pot.

“Maybe it’s a case of living in the past but it continues to be those formative short-board years that interest me as well as the gap between the real and imagined story of surfing”.

Gerry Wedd, RIP Surf and Sea Ceramics Exhibition Catalogue, 2011, Gold Coast City Gallery

When we embrace a sporting activity to such a degree that it must be practiced daily, we have made a life style choice. Gerry Wedd excelled in surfing as a youth. His choice of it as a life style and its physical challenges remain pivotal to his family life and creativity. As Wedd can boast of over 40 years as a skilled surfer he has witnessed the recent history of Australia surfing culture.

In these pots Wedd pays homage to his surfing heroes and famous historical surfing identities, like surf photographers and board makers.

- One surfing great was Isabel Letham who in 1914 was the first Australian person to ride a board in Australian surf, when she stood tandem with Duke Kahanamoku, the Hawaiian father of surfing who came to Australia giving board riding demonstrations. Isabel Letham appears on *Wahine Thong*, which commemorates pioneering women surfers. Wahini is a Hawaiian word for woman and Isabel appears holding her long board.

- Wedd’s boyhood heroes did not bat or kick balls but conquered the ocean. They include surfers Midget Farrelly, Peter Drouyn, George Greenough and Wayne Lynch. Wedd refers to this group of surfers as the anti-heroes of surfing, all highly talented surfers who did not make it into the history books as they saw surfing as a life style not as a profession. They did not fit the image of the bronzed, blonde haired, clean-living professional competitive surfers but preferred to adopt more eccentric and often difficult lifestyles. For Gerry Wedd they represent a darker side of the surfing world.

- Wedd’s work is full of references to the sea and surfing culture, including waves in many forms, beach sands and suggestions of the culture’s drug use. We also see historical motifs of surfing culture like decorative frangipani flowers, cars, boards and the ultimate beach footwear, the rubber thong. Blue, the colour of the sea, dominates the exhibition.

- It was Wedd’s in-depth knowledge of surfing culture that attracted MAMBO Graphics creators Dare Jennings and Wayne Golding to head-hunt him for their creative team. The first design Wedd created for a Mambo shirt showed a group of surfers in black silhouette against a terra cotta coloured background, a style from ancient Greek ceramics in which reddish terra cotta pottery was decorated with black figures of Greek heroes and athletes.

“When I started working with Mambo, Dare (Jennings) and Wayne (Golding) encouraged me to draw upon the surfer hero mythology and debunk it. Curiously enough the very debunking of it somehow added to the growth of the mythology “

Gerry Wedd RIP Surf and Sea Ceramics, Exhibition catalogue, 2011, Gold Coast City Gallery

- An important source of motifs is Wedd’s lifetime interest in surf magazine images and hero stories. Alby Falzon was one of the surf photographers most admired by Wedd.



Midget Vs Nat Jar, 2014.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist

“My version of surfing history is fuelled by those magazines and by anecdotes that in pre-internet days drifted back from the East Coast with surfers after their winter North Coast jaunts.”

Gerry Wedd, RIP Surf and Sea Ceramics, Exhibition Catalogue, 2011, Gold Coast City Gallery

Gerry's heroes were modern young men and women who did not face mythological monsters or warriors, but instead tackled the ocean with all its dangers. In turn they became part of the mythology of the Australian and global surfing culture.

1. FARRELLY PLATE: WHEEL THROWN, COBALT DECORATED, MID-FIRED

This homage plate to Wedd's surfing hero shows an image of Midget Farrelly walking toward the ocean carrying his board. The figure is almost in silhouette against the glare of the sun and is based on an iconic photograph by Alby Falzon. As well as being a famous Australian surf photographer Falzon was a film maker and surf magazine publisher. Wedd would have been familiar with Falzon's photographs from the magazines he read constantly in his younger days.

“All my formative reading years were spent pouring over surfing magazines; mind surfing the images.”

Gerry Wedd RIP SURF and Sea Ceramics Exhibition catalogue, 2011, Gold Coast City Gallery

- Larger than a dinner plate this piece is more like a commemorative platter painted with a soft blue image in cobalt glaze. The foreground of the plate is filled with hand written comments describing how surfing can be an addictive activity for those truly committed to the life style.
- Wedd was a boy of seven when 'Midget' Farrelly won the Inaugural World Surfing Championship in 1964, held at Sydney's Manly Beach. Wedd's older siblings keenly followed this major international surf competition, and it prompted Gerry to begin his long term membership of this sub culture.
- Farrelly became a national sporting hero and put Australia on the surfing map, drawing attention to it throughout the 1960s as one of the world's top surfing nations. Farrelly died in 2016 from cancer.

2. GEORGE GREENOUGH POT: COIL BUILT, SGRAFFITO, SLIP, EARTHENWARE

This pot is dedicated to the achievements and peculiarities of another Wedd surfing hero, George Greenough. In his 'tongue in cheek' style Wedd portrays events in Greenough's life in images bordered by intertwined Ocky straps, commonly used by surfers to secure surf boards to their vehicles.

- In one scene Greenough floats on his trademark air mattress while filming other surfers in action. A large camera is perched on his shoulder protected by a waterproof housing, one of his inventions.
- A lower image shows Greenough's feet, a reference to his refusal to wear shoes.
- Wedd emphasised movement of the water by applying his **sgraffito** technique. Tonal variations in the sky and water surface have been achieved by varying the density of sgraffito lines.
- Wedd's trademark **Blue and White** dominate the colour scheme although he added some subtle colours in the Ocky straps enclosing the images.

Greenough lives near Byron Bay and is known as one of the surfing worlds' great eccentrics. Born in the United States in 1941 his contribution to surfing is not as a pin up hero but as a thinker and innovator.

From his creation of the Velo knee board Greenough is credited for inspiring the short board revolution. For most of his life he has surfed using unorthodox equipment such as knee boards and canvas air mattresses and is renowned as a photographer and film maker of surfing-life.

3. DROUYN POT HAND BUILT: SLIP DECORATED, MID-FIRED

Graphic words and images on *Drouyn Pot* describe the famous and infamous achievements of legendary Australian surfer, Peter Drouyn. Rather than judging his hero Wedd is giving him a form, which may last longer than the man himself.

- Wedd has preserved Drouyn's contribution to surfing culture just as the ancient Attic pots illustrated the achievements of Greek heroes.
- Wedd hand built this urn to a scale and proportion which only an artisan of his ability could achieve. The Drouyn Vessel is one of several *Surf Urns* that Wedd created for this exhibition in homage to his surfing heroes.
- Drouyn has been captured by Wedd's painterly slip technique, surfing across the surface of the urn with all the agility and skill that made him famous.
- Quotes from Drouyn on the surface of the urn add to the decorative flow of the overall design and give the viewer further insight into Drouyn's exploits.

Born in 1949 in Surfer's Paradise, Queensland, Peter Drouyn was unique in Australia's surfing scene during the mid sixties and seventies, as the only Queenslander challenging the Australian surfing stronghold based in New South Wales. Drouyn was a highly successful and decorated surfer who worked the waves in a noticeably flamboyant style. When short boards came in he easily made the transition from the old long boards, like many of the young surfers in the late 60s.

Drouyn's eccentricities continually upset the surfing world. As contest director of the first Stubbies Pro at Burleigh Heads in Queensland In 1977 he introduced a man on man format to the competition, which has consequently been adopted by most world surfing events. In the 1980s he introduced surfing to China and by 2013 he had become Westerly Windina, his female identity. References to Drouyn's new identity Westerly appear on Wedd's pot. Floral decorations such as the frangapani flower are used extensively, and reference the Pacific birthplace of surfing, Hawaii.

Theme 4

GERRY WEDD'S HISTORY

post modern/ contemporary Framework



Into the woods (coloured), 2013. Photo: Courtesy of the artist

Works described in detail: *Willow Pot*, *Into the Woods Tableau*, *Teenage Wildlife Pot*

Gerry Wedd tells stories from recent history, often illustrating them with images in historical art styles drawn from his broad knowledge of art and ceramic traditions.

- For this show he has reworked the naive 18th century English **Willow Pattern** to show his dismay at our immorality. Originally used on pretty tableware Wedd has transformed the design into three dimensions on *Willow Pot* and *Into the Woods Tableau*.
- Images on *Teenage Wildlife Pot* are based on a well known 18th century Gainsborough portrait of a young man which Wedd has adapted to comment on narcissistic self indulgence in contemporary youth culture.
- Aboriginal deaths at the hands of white settlers are the theme of *History Pot* and *Head Pot*.
- **Abu Ghraib** prison crimes feature in *Banal Pot*, *So it Goes* and *Into the Woods Tableau*, as Wedd comments on our society's indifference to malevolence. His title *Banal Pot* refers to our apathy to cruelty, as if it was banal or commonplace. Abu Ghraib prison events of 2003 were carried out by the US CIA in Iraq, but not reported to the world until years later in 2006, when they shocked the world.
- *Voyager Pot* and *Emotional Map Pot* present dangerous migration voyages, made across oceans in historic and contemporary times.
- *Midget Myth Pot* celebrates surfing great, Midget Farrelly, in a style similar to ancient Greek **black figure** work, which portrayed male athletes in action. Wedd painted his figures in black slip onto a red ground and, like the ancient potters, he celebrates an athlete of his time.
- Australian political leaders from the 20th century appear on *True Believers Pot* and include Gough Whitlam, Bob Hawke, Don Dunstan and Paul Keating. Below their faces a patterned band depicts another significant 20th century political figure, Chinese leader Mao Tse Tung who is entwined with the dragon of good fortune, a national Chinese motif.

1. WILLOW POT: HAND BUILT COBALT DECORATED, EARTHENWARE.

Wedd uses motifs from the romantic **Willow Pattern** as if they are words in his own language for telling his stories. Although his *Willow Pot* is decorated with a painted landscape setting in the Willow Pattern style, Wedd tells a tale of cold hearted Australia losing its innocence, as it reacts to global events.

- Wedd wrapped his design around the pot making it a free standing picture story, in contrast to the original 18th century format of 2D stencilled images on flat plates. Wedd's version invites his audience to move round the pot, discovering the new story and how the scene has changed.
- The original tale was a search for love and paradise but Wedd has cleverly altered the pretty garden scene to represent Australia as a lost paradise. He has included several new Australian motifs and changed others.
- A giant Australian eucalypt tree replaces the garden fruit trees as it shelters the whole scene, its rounded foliage clumps painted in the style of the original pattern.
- Two kangaroos beneath the tree look out to the land they once inhabited freely, gazing sadly across a razor wire fence and at developments off shore. As if from a past and innocent Australia they stand in a historic pose, taken from the first painting of a kangaroo by London artist **George Stubbs** in 1772. Stubbs had painted his kangaroo without ever having seen one, but from the first kangaroo skin seen in England, taken by the Cook expedition which claimed Australia for the British Empire in 1770.
- Wedd has added a crowded boat drifting into the scene, looking for a safe harbour and refuge. However it searches in a place that treats its own land and people badly.
- In comparison to the size of original **Willow Ware**, Wedd has enlarged the scale of this scene, thus expanding its tragic story into a greater global drama. Although many familiar Willow Pattern motifs appear in Wedd's version, he has given them new meaning.
- The fence motif, originally a Chinese geometric wood lattice, has become a razor wire fence like those round detention centres, trapping wild animals, (symbols of Australia's lost innocence) and saying 'no' to people wanting to land.
- Several charming pagoda-like houses in the original waterside garden have become massive buildings looming in the background. The original delicately arched bridge has become brutal, defaced and ugly and leads to a tiny inhospitable tent. In the original pattern it leads to a better place.
- Wedd has made a confused and dangerous place and in this aspect *Willow Pot* sets the stage for another work, *Into the Woods Tableau*. Although *Willow Pot* looks like porcelain it is made of **earthen-ware** clay, constructed in **coils**.
- Wedd imitated white porcelain by covering the red terra cotta clay body with a white glaze, to form a white ground for painting his blue cobalt images.
- *Willow Pot* and other works in the exhibition demonstrate Wedd's use of the historical tradition of **blue and white** as a colour pair.

2. INTO THE WOODS: TABLEAU HAND BUILT, COBALT DECORATED, MID FIRED.

In this complex installation Wedd transformed several **Willow Pattern** motifs into three dimensional statuettes, grouped in mini tableaux within the larger tableau or scene. Each group illustrates a contemporary stories or real event, all taking place in a symbolic forest made of trees from the Willow Pattern garden.

- The title (and phrase) into the woods is a common metaphor for venturing into the unknown, like entering a forest where we cannot see ahead. Forests and woods are frequent motifs in mythological tales and fairy stories which tell of personal transformation and difficult choices. Out of the woods is a saying that means problems have been resolved and troubles are over.

- Wedd's title *Into the Woods Tableau* steps into the meaning of this metaphor by presenting unsolved mysteries of human nature in the woods.

- Additionally Wedd puns on the titles of two recent international performance works that explore the role of forests or woods in fairy stories. One was a recent Broadway musical by composer Stephen Sondheim, called *Into the Woods*, followed by a 2015 Disney film version titled *A Walk in the Woods*. Both performance works blend several fairy stories together, by having their characters come across each other during adventures in the forest. Wedd does the same with his tableau characters.

- Wedd puns on these more lightweight performance works, by making his work static, a group pose or tableau, showing grim stories which cannot have happy endings.

Wedd plays with our usual expectations for decorative ceramic ornaments, by making wicked actions and deeds suitable topics for statuettes.

- Instead of making cheerily sentimental ornaments, Wedd provokes his audience to have different emotional responses. By confronting us with cruel and immoral acts he exposing our capacity for bad behaviour. His characters seem locked into their more base motives, unable to resolve the horrors they have blindly committed.

- As well as Abu Ghraib jail atrocities, we see the meaningless slaughter of native animals, a tragic scene from a modern novel, and wildlife grieving for what is occurring to them.

- We see murdered and tortured kangaroos and emu, and a circle of puzzled budgies looking at one of their own, lying dead. Dingoes run through the scene with frightened kangaroos, all rushing to escape their land (the forest).

Four figures grouped together illustrate a short story by US author, Raymond Carver, called *So Much Water So Close to Home*.

- Also made into the recent Australian film *Jindabyne*, this story explores the callousness of several men on a fishing trip, who find a naked body of a woman lying in water near their camp. Preferring to carry on with their fishing weekend they do nothing about their discovery. They ignore the death, thus violating the woman's dignity and her human right to be respected.

- Wedd has clothed the woman as if recognising her dignity, her stylised figure and garments in the style of traditional Japanese doll figures. She lies dead between the three companions who stand with their backs turned on their proper duty. They are isolated and static, frozen in their refusal to do the right thing. Perhaps Wedd is commenting on the treatment of women by men.

Wedd has moved several **Willow Pattern** motifs from their pretty Chinese garden into a nastier 3 dimensional reality where they share the forest with dubious characters, as if released into the modern world.

- The original boat motif reappears in a reworked form. As in the original this traditional Chinese craft has the same cabin, the same night light on a pole and the boatman, yet it drifts out of control near the fishermen. The boatman statue is frozen in the stance for steering a boat but has lost its boating pole. Thus the boat cannot be steered, and is a directionless and tragic element in this sad forest.

- The decorative lattice fence of the willow garden zig zags across Wedd's forest, dividing one ghastly tableau from another.

- The forest is made of several trees forms recognisable from the garden, including the eucalypt tree from his *Willow Pot*.

In this work, Wedd tries to bring us to our moral senses. He has brought reality into the romance of the Willow garden, which has been portrayed as an Australian place where human beings are not yet acknowledging the results of their actions.

3. TEENAGE WILDLIFE VASE: COIL CONSTRUCTION, SLIP AND COBALT DECORATED, COOL ICE PORCELAIN CLAY, MID FIRED

This pot explores a concerning topic for Wedd, his view of contemporary teenage anger and narcissism. It is decorated with two figures of young men painted in blue cobalt glaze, surrounded with flourishing borders of flower stems and text banners.

- Wedd based his figures on a well known image from an 18th century English portrait, called *The Blue Boy*, painted in 1770 by Thomas Gainsborough. It portrays a well dressed young man, the son of a wealthy merchant who commissioned the original portrait. Blue appears in both works.
- Although this pot seems formal and decorative at first glance, we discover that unlike Gainsborough's portrait of a seemingly wealthy, polite and assured young man, Wedd presents teenage troubles and arrogance, revealed in text comments flowing round the vessel.
- Wedd's blue boys wear outfits similar to that of the 18th century portrait and stand holding a brimmed hat, in the same recognisable pose of the Gainsborough figure. In a reference to old-fashioned decorated oval formats for framing portraits, Wedd framed his young men with decorative ribbons entwined with rose stems and text banners. Wedd used two favourite techniques, **sgrafitto** and incised lines to make these details.
- Wedd is fond of double meaning and puns; in contrast to the original purpose for Gainsborough's portrait this pot presents damaged young men. They are blue boys in more ways than one; the word 'blue' describes feelings of depression or low spirits and this pot shows two blue boys (in cobalt blue) suffering the blues, brought on by their own life choices.
- To illustrate his theme that narcissism is a growing social problem and the cause of many personal crises, Wedd appears to have given his blue boys recognisable faces of recent celebrities who experienced hard times, Michael Jackson and David Bowie.

SECTION 3 FOR TEACHERS



3 Jars, 2012. Photo: Courtesy of the artist

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP VISIT TO GERRY WEDD: KITSCHEN MAN JAMFACTORY ICON 2016

This resource is designed for teachers and students of secondary senior secondary Visual Art.

If you are planning to bring a school group to this exhibition – book now. Bookings are required to guarantee scheduled entry to the exhibition. Please contact the venue for all bookings and enquiries.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING: LEADING UP TO YOUR VISIT

Inform the students about the origins and content of the exhibition.

Focus on student understanding of the history, the romance story and motifs of the original Willow Pattern.

Prepare colour images of the original Willow Pattern for students to take into the exhibition to understand and compare with Gerry Wedd's Willow Pattern pieces.

DOWNLOAD the *JamFactory Icon GerryWedd: Kitschen Man* Education Resource from the JamFactory website.

Devise activity and task sheets well prior to your visit, perhaps using the Get Started activities in this Resource.

Refer to the four Framing Themes in Section 2 of this Resource, Exploring the exhibition.

Visit selected websites from Section 5, Sources and further research, in this Resource.

READY FOR ACTION: BEFORE ENTERING THE EXHIBITION

On arrival your group will be met and welcomed by a member of the exhibition venue staff. If you plan to view the exhibition in class sub groups for individual responses to the viewing tasks below, smaller groups are recommended.

Organise these groups before students enter the exhibition space, with their viewing tasks. This is the best time to distribute prepared activity sheets perhaps the *Get Started Viewing Activities* included in this Education Resource, in section 6 below.

Prior to groups dispersing remind students of usual gallery viewing protocols, such as being aware of others using the space (noise) and not touching the works.

Scribing is useful for on site reporting and post-visit research. During your visit students may be involved in some group and individual analysis and response.

Emphasise the nature of viewing this kind of exhibition, which will require students to spend quality and reflective time with works, immersing themselves in thorough viewing experiences of up to 8 minutes or more with at least six of the 44 works.

IN THE EXHIBITION

We suggest that students attempt to engage with a minimum of two aspects: the views of the artist and any one of the four themes presented in this resource.

For this to succeed it would be useful if the students had previously accessed the *Gerry Wedd: Kitschen Man* Education Resource, prior to visiting the exhibition. This could enable students to make thematic selections before arrival.

Spend time moving between groups of students to ensure they are engaged with their activities and successfully absorbing what they are looking at.

UNRAVELLING WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN: AFTER THE EXHIBITION

Post exhibition activities primarily consist of sharing and analyzing information and opinions gathered during the exhibition visit. This material might be;

- Information gathered on-site
- individual opinions shared
- findings reported by groups focusing on tasks or themes

SECTION 4

FOR STUDENTS



Papaver bowl, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen



Cuff Cup, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen

GETTING STARTED

Viewing activities

The following tasks are designed to initiate and support structured viewing and engagement for students in the exhibition. They can be undertaken in any order and are suitable for individual and small group work. Implicit in some tasks is the idea that students or groups will report findings and discuss works with others.

Although scribing is not necessary to undertake these activities some tasks could benefit from scribing to support follow up discussions or projects.

TASK 1: THINK ABOUT

When you want to look at some works in particular is this because the idea is interesting, or the artist's technique or way of interpreting the subject?

Is there a particular work that makes some kind of social or political comment?

Is there a particular work that raises more questions than any other work? What kinds of questions does this work raise? Compare and discuss your findings with others.

TASK 2: FIRST & LAST IMPRESSIONS

Describe your reaction when you first came into the exhibition and looked around.

Was there a particular work you wanted to return to and look at again?

What were your reasons for this?

Which works challenge you in any way. Look at them again before you leave and consider why this is so. Before leaving check out the exhibition one more time to see if there is an idea or technique that you could try when you get back to school

TASK 3: EASY?

Which work do you think was the easiest and which work was the hardest to make? Describe reasons for your opinion.

TASK 4: ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE TO THE WORKS

Choose any work that attracts your attention and answer the following questions:

- *How are the visual qualities of this work appealing?*
- *Could this idea have been better expressed in a different way?*
- *Can you see any connections between this kind of art and other forms you know about?*
- *What do you think this work is about, or might be saying?*
- *Has this work given you an idea for something you could make as part of your art studies?*

Tell someone else your reasons for selecting this work.

TASK 5: ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE TO THE EXHIBITION

Write a review of the exhibition that describes any links or relationships between the works.

Choose one of the themes suggested in this Education Resource and review the exhibition from this perspective.

Are there other themes not identified in this Resource, which could apply to this exhibition of works.

Compare two or more works which appear to be exploring similar ideas in different ways.



Gram Jar, 2016. Photo: Andrew Cohen

SECTION 5

FURTHER RESEARCH

CATALOGUES

JamFactory Gerry Wedd Kitschen Man, 2016 Icon Exhibition

Gold Coast City Gallery *Gerry Wedd RIP Surf and Sea* Exhibition, Virginia Rigney 2011

SOURCES AND LINKS

GERRY WEDD

www.weddwould.blogspot.com **Video of Gerry Wedd making a pot, 2:45 minutes**

<http://www.facebook.com/gerry.wedd>

www.tractorgirl.com.au/the-crafted-object-gerry-wedd-ceramicist **Interview**

www.coastalwatch.com/surfing/10874/big-sky-wire-gerry-wedd **Interview with Gerry Wedd, 19 Sept 2012**

www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agasa/home/Exhibitions/SALA/Gerry_WEDD.html **description of SALA (South Australian Living Artists festival) exhibition**

www.guildhouse.org.au/events/chris-de-rosa-gerry-wedd **Open house tour of Chris de Rosa and Gerry Wedd**

WEDD'S WORKSHOPS

www.mccoysurfboards.com/mccoy-surfers/40-mccoy-gerry-wedd **Wedd talks about surfing**

www.publishing.arthub.com.au/news-article/reviews/writing-and-publishing/jade-wildy/gerry-wedd-thong-cycle-174274 **Synopsis of book on Gerry Wedd by Mark Thomson**

www.australianpotteryatbemboka.com.au/shop/index.php?manufacturers_id=463

www.jamfactory.com.au **JamFactory website**

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/booksandarts/past-programs/?page=3> **AM radio broadcast, Kitschen Man exhibition, 2 Sept 2016**

CERAMICS

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/a-to-z-of-ceramics/> **Victoria and Albert Museum London, Ceramics Collection**

BLUE AND WHITE CERAMICS

www.Object.com.au/archive/pages/documents/AsecretHistoryofBlueandWhite.pdf **Press release for exhibition and publication, A Secret History of Blue and White: Contemporary Australian Ceramics**

www.visual-arts-cork.com/east-asian-art/chinese-porcelain.htm **Characteristics, history, types of fine white china**

WILLOW PATTERN

www.thepotteries.org/patterns/willow.html **Story of Willow Pattern and images**

www.abc.net.au/.../the-history-of-china's-willow-pattern **Willow Pattern history**

SURFING

www.encyclopediaofsurfing.com/entries/farrelly-midget

www.encyclopediaofsurfing.com/entries/greenough-george

www.encyclopediaofsurfing.com/entries/drouyn-peter

CERAMIC TRADITIONS cited by Gerry Wedd

Asian porcelain traditions: cultural design styles from Vietnam, China, Japan, Korea

Chinese export ceramics including Willow Ware from China before English versions appeared

Blue and White colour pairing: Asian, European, Islamic

Colonial Australian traditions from Europe: teapots illustrated with scenic views

European mythology: classical Greek and Roman: the legend of Icarus

European Mediterranean: Attica in ancient Greece; black figures on terracotta

English Willow Pattern: English manufacturing potteries

English Staffordshire ceramics: popular 18th and 19th century porcelain and bone china figurines, of local characters including petty criminals farm animals and dogs

Mediterranean, Attica: ancient Greek terracotta and black figure work

Mexico: Olmec terra cotta figures, Day of the Dead Festival; fired clay sculptures

SECTION 6

GLOSSARY

ABU GHRAIB Town in Iraq near Baghdad, the site of a ruined gaol used between 2003 and 2006 by the US CIA as a detention centre for Iraqi detainees (not prisoners of war) during the Iraq War. Known for inhuman cruelties by US military staff.

Gerry Wedd examples: Banal Pot, Into the Woods Tableau

AESTHETIC Cultural philosophy of what is beautiful in art and design, according to the principles of good taste in that culture eg Islamic aesthetic; Japanese aesthetic

AMPHORA Vessel, ancient Mediterranean, two handled, for storage

ARTISAN Skilled worker or maker, often of handmade objects eg a production potter, basket maker, bread maker

ARTIST Skilled creator or performer who also demonstrates inventiveness, and originality, embedding their own ideas, point of view and attitudes, through employing technical expertise. Extends the pragmatic limits an artisan works within.

AUSTRALIANA Kitsch objects or images styled & decorated with Australian motifs

BISCUIT Low fired unglazed pottery, often a first firing before glazes and embellishments are applied. Subsequent firings would be at higher temperatures

BISQUE Biscuit version of porcelain; low or mid fired unglazed white porcelain with a matte appearance and texture to the touch. A ground for applying further glazes

BLACK FIGURE Style of vase painting from ancient Greece in which figures and decorative bands of pattern were painted in a slip that turned black during firing, leaving the color of the fired clay as the background

BLUE AND WHITE CERAMICS Colour pair tradition in textiles and ceramics, with a long history across the globe including Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

- Blue and white appears on Middle East Islamic tiles, on European stove tiles and tableware, in Asian and African indigo textiles, in French `toile de Jouy` fabrics and decorative arts, in ceramic traditions from South Eastern Asia and Japan, Korea and China.

- Early European trade missions to Asia from the early 1600s purchased goods made in Chinese and Japanese pottery towns, where blue and white porcelain was produced especially for this export market.
- Blue and white pottery was later made in England and the Netherlands, particularly in the town of Delft where Delft Blue ceramics are still made.

BODY The aggregate of matter making the substance we call clay.

CERAMICS Objects of clay fired in an oven or kiln; can include household crockery, ornaments, tiles, garden pots and artworks.

CHINOISERIE see WILLOW PATTERN

COBALT GLAZE Blue glaze, a mixture of minerals including cobalt and used mostly on white clays to achieve a blue and white aesthetic.

Cobalt is Gerry Wedd`s favourite glaze which he uses as a thin, watery paint

COIL CONSTRUCTION Ancient technique for constructing pots whereby long, rolled strands of properly prepared clay are laid on top of each other and joined through blending; coil to coil. Coils can be almost any size, if used with skill.

Gerry Wedd examples; Bullies Pot, Teenage Wildlife Vase, George Greenborough Pot

COOLAMON Dish, Australian Indigenous, made of wood or thick bark; shallow, open ended, multi purpose, used for carrying foodstuffs, water and babies; also used as a winnowing tool for separating grain from husks

COOL ICE POCELAIN see PORCELAIN

COUNTER CULTURE Popular youth culture of the early 1960s from the west coast of the USA; rejected the previous 1950s post World War II conservative culture.

EARTHENWARE Low-fire pottery made from a coarse earth coloured clay, porous ie not waterproof when fired. To be functional earthenware must be glazed or sealed. Earthenware has a duller sound when tapped, is more fragile and more porous than high fired products.

FORM In art a 3D shape; for example, as a circle is a shape a sphere is a form

GEORGE STUBBS KANGAROO Particular historical image of a kangaroo created soon after New Holland, later Australia, was annexed by Cook in 1770. A kangaroo skin that had been taken to London on this expedition was restuffed for display and although famed animal artist George Stubbs had never seen a living kangaroo, he made an image of the standing animal skin in 1772.

Although not anatomically correct his image is now famous for its innocent expression and vulnerable stance. A number of other Australian artists also refer to Stubbs kangaroo in their work.

GLAZE Glass like layer on pottery protecting the clay body and producing surface decorations. Layers of liquid clay of various mixes are applied as surface coatings onto ceramic objects, to seal the pot when fired. Glazes are applied in a liquid form by painting or dipping. Glazes contain a degree of powdered glass and oxides, often mixed with coloured clays, and are designed to melt when fired, thus changing their chemical composition to becoming vitrified.

GREENWARE Term given to clay objects which have been shaped but not yet bisque fired, which converts them from clay to ceramic. Greenware includes all stages of drying, from wet to damp, soft leather-hard, leather-hard, stiff leather-hard, dry or bone dry.

HAND BUILT Clay building techniques including coil construction, pinching and slab construction

HAND MODELLED Clay worked by hand to form individual sculpted pieces, often used for larger sculpture concept maquettes and originals for cast metal sculptures

HIGH FIRING Temperatures around 1300 degs C which produces ceramics in the stoneware to porcelain range. High fired pottery has a high clear ring when tapped.

INCISION Decorative technique whereby surface designs are scratched or cut into the clay surface, or into a slip layer to reveal the clay body beneath

KAOLIN Fine white clay resulting from the decomposition of feldspar. Used in making porcelain which when fired, is desired for its translucent whiteness.

KITSCH Old German word describing aesthetic values of over sentimentality, over decoration in art, music, literature. Some artists now explore kitsch as an art form, including Australian ceramic artists Gerry Wedd and Mark Thomson, American artist Jeff Koons and illustrators Thomas Kinkade and Norman Rockwell.

KILN Oven like device for baking (firing) dried clay greenware bricks, pottery and tiles. Can be fired with wood, charcoal, gas, or electricity.

LOW FIRE Temperatures in the range of 1100 to 1220 degs C, achieved in a low temperature kiln. These temperatures usually bake coarse, porous clay to make terracotta earthenware and bricks.

Low fired pottery is more economical on fuel than high firing, especially in locations where community potters make everyday cooking and storage vessels for householders in many parts of the world, eg China, India, Mexico, Africa.

MOTIF Distinctive element or idea in art, literature, music; a part of the whole, often repeated

OXIDES Colouring agents for glazes, metal oxides can be mixed with water and applied to the surface of clay. By varying the amount of material applied and rubbed off, the potter can achieve effects similar to stained wood. The most common stain is iron oxide (rust).

PORCELAIN White glass like fired clay for crockery, urns and vases. The primary qualities of porcelain are its translucency, hardness and whiteness. While it can be worked into shape as malleable clay, when fired properly it reaches a state similar to glass.

- The term porcelain is an early European name for the original Chinese product, from the Old Italian word `porcellana` for its similarity to a fine, translucent shell from the Mediterranean Sea.
- The word china, from the source of porcelain, China, is now a generic name for less pure clay recipes used in cheap mass produced white crockery.
- Porcelain clay is the valuable white clay used for porcelain ware. Porcelain clay is a mixture of kaolin, the pure white primary or base clay, mixed with silica and feldspar for their glasslike translucency and hardness.
- A special porcelain clay used by Gerry Wedd, called Cool ice porcelain, is a mid fired, translucent, cool white, porcelain clay body which fires between 1186 and 1240 degrees C; It is one of several clay recipes devised by Tasmanian potter Les Blakeborough.
- Although porcelain is an ancient Asian (Chinese, Korean) product originating over 3000 years ago it evolved into a high fire form between 206 and 220 BC during China's Eastern Han Dynasty.
- The Chinese porcelain industry kept its clay recipes secret, enabling Chinese porcelain to be sold into Europe from the mid 1400s AD.
- However in the 17th Century English potteries invented Bone China, powdered bone was added to the clay mix, to compete with imported porcelain goods from Asia

POTTERY Vessels made of baked clay; also the name for a potter's workshop

SACRED COWS Ideas or institutions that cannot be criticised or changed, derived from Hindu respect for the cow as a holy animal.

SGRAFFITO Decoration technique, from the Italian word meaning "scratched through". The background surrounding a shape is cut away to a layer below perhaps of colored slip coating. The desired shape stands slightly proud of its background.

SLAB CONSTRUCTION Prepared (kneaded) malleable clay is rolled to a consistent thickness into slabs, before being cut into flat shapes for platforms or straight sided pieces, often joined together using scoring and wet clay called slip. *Gerry Wedd examples; soles of all Thong pieces and Tableau bases.*

SLIP GLAZE Fine liquid form of clay applied to the surface of a vessel prior to firing, or after the first fire at a low temperature. Slip fills in pores and gives a uniform color. Further applications of different glazes can be applied over this layer for added effects. Gerry Wedd often uses slip in combination with other colouring agents for glazes eg cobalt. *Gerry Wedd examples; Open road Pot, So It Goes, Gram Pot.*

SPRIGGING (sprigged) 3D decoration embossed onto pottery, usually press molded shapes applied to greenware or bisque. The resulting pottery is termed sprigged. Sprigs are made by pressing moist clay into small moulds made of bisque-fired clay or plaster for making multiples, which are then adhered to the surface of a ceramic object as 3D decoration. *Gerry Wedd examples; Last House Teapot, Henry Lee Pot, So It Goes, Open Road Pot.*

SUCKER PUNCH For Wedd, a style device of presenting unpleasant ideas whereby we initially see pretty embellishments that surprisingly contain nasty human tales. Wedd quietly delivers punch like messages.

TABLEAU a static group of motionless figures arranged to present a scene

Gerry Wedd example: Into the Woods Tableau

TERRA COTTA CLAY Orange-brown earthenware clay body commonly used for ceramic sculpture, floor tiles, roof tiles, flower pots. Commonly found in ancient Greek and Mediterranean ceramics. Terra cotta clay needs glaze to be waterproof. *Gerry Wedd example: Birthday Party Pot, Willow Pot*

TRADITIONS Long held customs, practices, opinions, beliefs handed down for posterity from previous generations

URN Vase shape container with a flattened foot or base for standing upright, usually rounded in shape for storage, sometimes has a tap near the bottom; can have a lid
Gerry Wedd example: History Pot

VITREOUS Qualities of glass; brittleness, hardness, transparency or translucency

WHEEL TURNED, THROWN Old English meaning spin, used in conjunction with a potter's wheel. A piece of clay is forcefully placed, or thrown, onto the centre of a spinning potter's wheel before the potter shapes the clay by compressing and manipulating it while the wheel keeps spinning.

Some objects require the potter to combine several thrown shapes together to form one piece. A teapot can be constructed from several thrown forms, including the lid.

Gerry Wedd examples: Blokes vase; the tea pots; True Believers pot

WILLOW PATTERN Tableware pattern which looks like Chinese ware but is a late 18th century Chinoiserie i.e. an English blue on white design composed by English manufacturing potteries to look like imported Chinese ceramics.

- Manufacturing Willow ware was a strategic step taken by English potteries in the 18th century. They wanted to produce Chinese look-alike ceramics to profit from fashion of the time for imported Chinese ceramics.
- As they industrialised for the mass-production of domestic ware, the huge industrial scale pottery factories in regional England like Spode, Minton, Royal Worcester and Wedgwood developed a new technology of printing stencils onto ceramics before the firing process.
- Their newly designed Willow Patterns suited this technological innovation. Willow Pattern was originally designed in a round format for printing on flat, round plates.
- Considered to be a tragic love story the scene is a narrative picture rather than a border or repeat pattern. It tells of forbidden love and death, of escape and pursuit by a wicked father, with the fleeing lovers represented by two love birds in the sky above. The origins of this tale and designs can be researched.
- Willow pattern has now become a tradition, with recognisable motifs:

Conventional motifs seen in the Willow Pattern usually include several pagoda like houses in a garden setting by water, with the main house on the right.

Three or four figures run from right to left across a three arched stone bridge, escaping from the main house on the right. They have come through the garden where several particularly shaped garden trees surround the two main houses. The bridge provides a route between land and an island. A small boat with a cabin and a night lamp on a pole and steered by a boat man is usually on the left of the bridge.

Further motifs include a particular style of wooden lattice garden fence bordering the water edge, seen at the lower right foreground, where a pathway leads to the main building. The houses in Chinese style pavilions with layered roofs and corner finials are set amongst garden trees, shaped by pruning and with varying foliage. One prominent tree carries round fruits, either oranges or apples, and a spindly willow tree occupies the centre. This tree gives the pattern its name. Sometimes other people enter the main pavilion from the garden.

Gerry Wedd plays with particular motifs in his works Willow Pot and Into the Woods Tableau.

WILLOW WARE tableware carrying the Willow Pattern.

Jam Factory



Australian Government



Government
of South Australia



Australian Government



THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



Government
of South Australia

